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REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF
SUBSIDIARY BODIES: ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

Programme budget implications of the draft resolution
contained in document E/1997/L.49

Establishment of an ad hoc open-ended
Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 31
of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council

1. Under the terms of operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, the Economic and Social Council would decide to establish under the aegis of the Commission on Sustainable Development an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests.

2. In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3, the Council would decide that the Forum should hold its first (organizational) session in New York from 1 to 3 October 1997 as well as three substantive sessions and should submit its report to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session, in 2000.

3. Under the terms of operative paragraph 4, the Council would recommend that the Forum should schedule its work programme and decide on the modalities of its work, including the election and designation of officers as well as the

duration of its substantive sessions, which could be up to two weeks each, and recognizing the wide range of issues to be addressed, would decide that the Forum may consider dividing its work between in-session working groups, on the understanding that no more than two working groups would meet simultaneously.

4. By operative paragraph 5, the Council would decide that the Forum should be serviced by a small secretariat within the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, supported by voluntary extrabudgetary contributions from Governments and international organizations, that the operation of the Forum would require funding to support activities as well as meetings and participation by representatives of developing countries and major groups from developing countries, and that the participation of major groups should be in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission. In this regard, the following sources of funding should be considered: (a) voluntary extrabudgetary contributions from Governments and international organizations to support the work of the Forum; (b) secondments from international organizations; and (c) in-kind contributions from countries and international organizations, including hosting of meetings.

5. The first (organizational) session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests would be held in New York from 1 to 3 October 1997, with interpretation in the six official languages for two meetings a day.

6. The Forum is expected to hold its three substantive sessions, one each in 1998, 1999 and 2000, for a period of up to two weeks each. Full conference services in all six official languages would be required for two simultaneous meetings in the morning and afternoon, for a total of four meetings per day or 40 meetings for each substantive session.

7. The substantive servicing of the Forum would be provided by a small secretariat within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

8. In accordance with established practice, the venue of all the sessions of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests would be New York.

9. On the basis of the above assumptions, the requirements under the regular budget for 1997 and the biennium 1998-1999 related to the establishment of the Forum are estimated, on a full cost basis, as follows:

	1997 US$	1998-1999 US$
Travel of the 53 members of Commission on Sustainable Development to the Forum (first (organizational) session in 1997 and one substantive session each in 1998 and 1999)	132 500	277 000

Conference-servicing requirements

I. First (organizational) session (three days in 1997), New York

	US$
Meeting services (A,C,E,F,R,S) 6 meetings	39 200
Pre-session documentation (A,C,E,F,R,S) 15 pages, 1 document	13 200
In-session documentation (A,C,E,F,R,S) 5 pages, 1 document	4 600
Post-session documentation (A,C,E,F,R,S) 15 pages, 1 document	13 300
Other requirements	3 400
Total I	73 800

	1998 US$	1999 US$
II. Substantive sessions (two weeks each in 1998 and 1999 in New York)		
Meeting services (A,C,E,F,R,S) 40 meetings	260 200	262 400
Pre-session documentation (A,C,E,F,R,S) 16 pages, 5 documents	15 300	15 400
In-session documentation (A,C,E,F,R,S) 4 pages, 5 documents	4 300	4 400
Post-session documentation (A,C,E,F,R,S) 30 pages, 1 document	26 600	27 300
Other requirements	22 800	23 500
Total II	329 200	333 000

10. Should the Economic and Social Council adopt the draft resolution contained in document E/1997/L.49, the costs related to the attendance of the Commission's members to the Forum's sessions in 1997 ($132,500) are expected to be absorbed within existing resources under section 7 A of the approved programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. The costs for the biennium 1998-1999 (US$ 277,000) represent the additional requirements under section 7 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. These requirements would be reported to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and dealt with in accordance with the procedure for the use and operation of the contingency fund established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211.

11. The substantive and conference-servicing costs for the year 2000 would be considered in the context of the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

12. As regards the organizational session from 1 to 3 October 1997 in New York, it is to be noted that in practice and as a general rule, conference facilities are strictly limited for the use of the meetings of the General Assembly and its Main Committees during its regular annual session from mid-September until its adjournment in December. However, it would be possible to accommodate, within existing resources, the three-day meeting on the dates indicated, which fall during the general debate segment of the regular session when some limited conference-servicing resources are expected to be available.

13. The requirements for the meetings scheduled during the biennium 1998-1999 are estimated on a full costs basis at US$ 662,200. It should be noted in this regard that estimates for conference costs are based on the theoretical assumption that no part of the conference-servicing requirements would be met from within the permanent conference-servicing capacity included under section 27 E (Conference services) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The extent to which the Organization's permanent conference-servicing capacity would need to be supplemented by temporary assistance resources can be determined only in the light of the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1998-1999. Provisions have, however, been made under section 27 E of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 not only for meetings programmed at the time of

budget preparations but also for meetings which might be authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings and conferences are consistent with the pattern of meetings of past years.

Contingency fund

14. It will be recalled that under the procedure established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the proposed programme budget. Under this procedure, if additional expenditures are proposed that exceed the resources available from the contingency fund, the activities concerned can be implemented only through redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modifications of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred to a later biennium. A consolidated statement of all programme budget implications and revised estimates will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

15. No activities could be identified, at this stage, for termination, deferral, curtailment or modification under section 7 (Policy coordination and sustainable development) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 in order to accommodate the additional requirements of US$ 277,000 referred to in paragraph 10 above.

Summary

16. Should the Economic and Social Council decide to adopt draft resolution E/1997/L.49, additional requirements of US$ 277,000 would be required over and above the resources proposed under section 7 (Policy coordination and sustainable development) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.